OUR LITTLE CANADIAN COUSIN

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Our Little Canadian Cousin

THE

Little Cousin Series

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" TWO CHILDREN SAT ON THE GRASS UNDER THE LILACS "
(*See page 2*)

Our Little Canadian Cousin

By

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Illustrated by

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Boston

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Preface

In "Our Little Canadian Cousin," my intention has been to tell, in a general way, although with a defined local setting, the story of Canadian home life. To Canadians, *home life* means not merely sitting at a huge fire-place, or brewing and baking in a wide country kitchen, or dancing of an evening, or teaching, or sewing; but it means the great outdoor life — sleighing, skating, snow-shoeing, hunting, canoeing, and, above all, "camping out" — the joys that belong to a vast, uncrowded country, where there is "room to play."

This wide and beautiful Canadian Dominion possesses, of course, a great variety of climate and of scenery. To treat at all adequately of those things, or of the country's picturesque and romantic history, would require far more scope than is afforded by this one small story.

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Our Little Canadian Cousin

CHAPTER I.

It was the very first day of the loveliest month in the year. I suppose every month has its defenders, or, at least, its apologists, but June — June in Canada — has surely no need of either. And this particular morning was of the best and brightest. The garden at the back of Mr. Merrithew's house was sweet with the scent of newly blossomed lilacs, and the freshness of young grass. The light green of the elms was as yet undimmed by the dust of summer, and the air was like the elixir of life.

Two children sat on the grass under the lilacs, making dandelion chains and talking happily.

Jack, a little fair-haired boy of six, was noted for his queer speeches and quaint ideas. His sister Marjorie was just twice his age, but they were closest chums, and delighted in building all sorts of air-castles together. This afternoon, when she had finished a chain of marvellous length, she leant back against the lilac-trees and said, with a sigh of happiness:

"Now, Jack, let's make plans!"

"All right," Jack answered, solemnly. "Let's plan about going to Quebec next winter."

"Oh, Jackie! Don't let's plan about winter on the first day of June! There's all the lovely, lovely summer to talk about,—and I know two fine things that are going to happen."

"All right!" said Jackie again. It was his

favourite expression. "I know one of them; Daddy told me this morning. It's about Cousin Dora coming to stay with us."

"Yes—isn't it good? She's coming for a whole year, while uncle and aunt go out to British Columbia,—to make him well, you know."

"I wish she was a little boy," said Jackie, thoughtfully. "But if she's like you, she'll be all right, Margie. What's the other nice thing you know?"

"Oh, you must try to guess, dear! Come up in the summer-house; it's so cosy there, and I'll give you three guesses. It's something that will happen in July or August, and we are *all* in it, father and mother and you and Cousin Dora, and a few other people."

They strolled up to the vine-covered summer-house, and settled down on its broad seat, while Jack cudgelled his brains for an idea as to a possible good time.

"Is it a picnic?" he asked at last.

Marjorie laughed.

"Oh, ever so much better than that," she cried.

"Try again."

"Is it — is it — a visit to the seaside?"

"No; even better than that."

"Is it a pony to take us all driving?"

"No, no. That's your last guess. Shall I tell you?"

"Ah, yes, please do!"

"Well, — mother says, if we do well at school till the holidays, and everything turns out right, she and father — will — take us camping!"

"Camping? Camping out? Really in tents? Oh, good, good!"

And Jackie, the solemn, was moved to the extent of executing a little dance of glee on the garden path.

"Camping out" is a favourite way of spend-

ing the summer holiday-time among Canadians. Many, being luxurious in their tastes, build tiny houses and call them camps, but the true and only genuine "camping" is done under canvas, and its devotees care not for other kinds.

As our little New Brunswickers were talking of all its possible joys, a sweet voice called them from the door of the big brick house.

"Marjorie! Jack! Do you want to come for a walk with mother?"

There was no hesitation in answering this invitation. The children rushed pell-mell down the garden path, endangering the swaying buds of the long-stemmed lilies on either side.

Mrs. Merrithew stood waiting for them, a tall, plump lady in gray, with quantities of beautiful brown hair. She carried a small basket and trowel, at sight of which the children clapped their hands.

"Are we going to the woods, mother?" Marjorie cried, and "May I take my cart and my spade?" asked Jackie.

"Yes, dearies," Mrs. Merrithew answered. "We have three hours before tea-time, and Saturday wouldn't be much of a holiday without the woods. Put on your big hats, and Jack can bring his cart and spade, and Marjorie can carry the cookies."

"Oh, please let me haul the cookies in my cart," said Jack. "Gentlemen shouldn't let ladies carry things, father says,—but Margie, you *may* carry the spade if you want something in your hands very much!"

"All right, boy," laughed Marjorie. "I certainly do like something in my hands, and a spade will look much more ladylike than a cooky-bag!"

The big brick house from which Mrs. Merrithew and the children set out on their walk stood on one of the back streets of a

little New Brunswick city, — a very small but beautiful city, built on a wooded point that juts out into the bright waters of the St. John River. Of this river the little Canadian Cousins are justly proud, for, from its source in the wilds of Quebec to its outlet on the Bay of Fundy, it is indeed "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever."

Our little party soon left the streets, went through a wide green space covered with venerable maples, crossed a tiny stream and a railway track, and entered the woods that almost covered the low hill behind the town. Though it was really but one hill, the various roads that subdivided it gave it various names, some derived from the settlements they led to, and some from buildings on the way. It was through the woods of "College Hill" that Marjorie and Jack and their mother wandered. Being all good walkers, they were soon back of the fine old college, which stands looking

gravely out over the tree-embowered town to the broad blue river.

When the delicious green and amber shadows of the woods were reached, little Jack at once began to search for fairies. Marjorie contented herself with looking for wild flowers, and Mrs. Merrithew sought for ferns young enough to transplant to her garden.

"I am afraid I have left it rather late," she said at last. "They are all rather too well-grown to stand moving. But I will try a few of the smallest. What luck have my chicks had? Any fairies, Jackie?"

Jackie lifted a flushed face from its inspection of a tiny hole in the trunk of a fir-tree.

"No fairies *yet*, mother; but I think one lives in here, only she won't come out while I am watching."

Mrs. Merrithew smiled sympathetically. She heartily agreed with the writer (though

she could not remember who it was) who said: "I always expect to find something wonderful, unheard-of, in a wood."

"In olden days," she said, "people believed that there were beautiful wood-spirits, called dryads, who had their homes in trees. They were larger than most fairies, and yet they were a kind of fairy."

"Please tell more about them, mother," said Marjorie, coming up with her hands full of yellow, speckled adder's-tongue.

"I know very little more, I am sorry to say," their mother answered, laughing. "Like Jackie with *his* fairies, I have always hoped to see one, but never have as yet."

"Are they good things?" Jackie asked, "or would they frighten little boys?"

"Oh, my dear, they were always said to be kind and beautiful, and rather timid, more apt to be frightened themselves than to frighten any one else. But remember, dears, mother

did not say there *were* such things, but only that people used to think so."

"Please tell us a story about one, mother," Jack pleaded.

But Mrs. Merrithew shook her head.

"We will keep the story for some other time," she said. "Let us have a cooky now, and a little rest, before we go home."

This proposal was readily agreed to. They chose a comfortable spot where a little group of white birches gave them backs on which to lean, opened the precious bag, and were soon well occupied with its crisp and toothsome contents. Mrs. Merrithew, knowing well that little folk are generally troubled with a wonderful thirst, had also brought a cup and a bottle of lemonade. How doubly delicious things tasted in the clear, spicy air of the woods!

By the time Jack had disposed of his sixth cooky he felt ready for conversation,

"Mother," he said, "I wish you would tell us all about Dora."

"All about Dora, dearie? That would take a long time, I expect. But it would *not* take long to tell you all that I know about her. I have only seen her twice, and on one of those occasions she was a baby a month old, and the next time only two years, — and as she is now, I do not know her at all."

"But — oh, you know, mother — tell us about her father and mother, and her home, and everything like that. It makes her more interesting," urged Marjorie.

Mrs. Merrithew saw that she was to be beguiled into a story in any case, so she smiled and resigned herself to her fate.

"Well, my dears, I know a great many things about Dora's father, for he is my only brother, and we were together almost constantly until we were both grown up. Then your Uncle Archie, who had studied electrical

engineering, went up to Montreal, and there secured a good position. He had only been there a short time when he met a very charming young lady" ("*This* sounds quite like a book-story," Marjorie here interposed) "by whom he was greatly attracted. She was partly French, her mother having been a lady of old French family. But her father was an English officer, of the strongest English feelings, so this charming young lady (whose name was Denise Allingham) combined the characteristics — at least all the best characteristics — of both races. Do you know what that means, Jackie?"

Jack nodded, thoughtfully.

"I think so, mother. I think it means that she — that young lady — had all the nicenesses of the French and all the goodnesses of the English."

"That is just it, my dear, and a very delicate distinction, too," cried his mother, clap-

ping her hands in approval, while Jackie beamed with delight.

"Well, to continue: Miss Denise Allingham, when your Uncle Archie met her, was an orphan, and not well off. She was teaching in an English family, and not, I think, very happy in her work. She and your uncle had only known each other about a year when they were married."

"And lived happily ever after?" Marjorie asked.

Mrs. Merrithew considered a moment, then:

"Yes, I am sure I can say so," she answered. "They have had some business troubles, and a good deal of sickness, but still they have been happy through it all. And they have one dear little daughter, whom they love devotedly, and who is named 'Dora Denise,' after her mother and — who else?"

"You, mother, you," both children exclaimed.

"The chief trouble this happy trio has had," Mrs. Merrithew continued, "has been the delicate health of your uncle. For the last four years he has not been strong. Twice they have all three gone away for his health, and now the doctors have ordered him to try the delightful climate of British Columbia, and to spend at least a year there if it agrees with him. He needs all his wife's attention this time, and that, my dears, is why little Dora Denise Carman is coming to spend a year with her New Brunswick relations.

"And now, chicks, look at that slanting, golden light through the trees. That means tea-time, and homeward-bound!"

CHAPTER II.

It was a tired and homesick little girl that Mr. Merrithew helped out of the coach and led up the steps of his house, about a fortnight after our story opens. The journey from Montreal had been long and lonely, the parting from her parents hard, and the thought of meeting the unknown relatives had weighed upon her mind and helped to make her unusually subdued. But when the door of the Big Brick House (which had been named by the neighbours when it was the only brick house on the street, and the largest one in town) opened, and her aunt's motherly arms closed around her, while Marjorie's rosy, laughing face and Jackie's fair, cherubic one

beamed on her in greeting, her spirits began to revive. The greeting was so warm and kind, and the joy at her coming so genuine, that her fatigue seemed turned, as by magic, to a pleasant restfulness, and her homesickness was lost in this bright home atmosphere.

Mrs. Merrithew took the little newcomer to her room, had her trunks settled conveniently, and then left her to prepare for the late tea which was waiting for them all. When Dora was ready, she sat down in the little armchair that stood near a table piled with books, and looked about her contentedly.

There was an air of solid comfort and cosiness about this house that rested her. This room — which her aunt had told her was just opposite Marjorie's — was all furnished in the softest shades of brown and blue, her favourite colours. The carpet was brown, with a very small spray of blue here and there; the wall-paper was lighter, almost creamy, brown, with

a dainty harebell pattern, and the curtains had a rich brown background with various Persian stripes, in which blue and cream and gold predominated. The bed, to her great delight, had a top-piece, and a canopy of blue-flowered chintz, and the little dressing-table was draped to match it. Just over the side of the bed was a book-shelf, quite empty, waiting for her favourite books. While she sat and looked about in admiration, the door was pushed gently open, and a plump maltese kitten came in, gazed at her doubtfully a moment, and then climbed on her lap. Then Marjorie's bright face appeared at the door, and, "May I come in?" she asked.

"Oh, please do," Dora cried. "Kitty has made friends with me already, and I think that must be a good omen."

Marjorie laughed, as she patted the little bunch of blue-gray fur in Dora's lap.

"*Jackie* has made friends with you already,"

she said, "and I think that is a better omen still. He told mother he thought you were 'the beautifulest girl he ever saw.'"

Dora's eyes opened wide with astonishment. "It is the first time I ever was called beautiful," she said, "let alone 'beautifulest.' What a dear boy Jack must be."

Then they both laughed, and Marjorie, obeying one of her sudden impulses, threw her arms around Dora's neck and gave her a cousinly hug. "You and I will be friends, too," she said. "I knew it as soon as I looked at you."

Dora's dark brown eyes looked gravely into Marjorie's blue ones. She seemed to be taking the proposition very seriously.

"I have always wished for a real friend, or a twin sister," she said, thoughtfully. "The twin sister is an impossibility, and I have never before seen a girl that I wanted for a great, *great* friend. But you, — ah, yes! You are

like my father, and besides, we are cousins, and that makes us understand each other. Let us be friends."

She held out her hand with a little gesture which reminded Marjorie that this pale, dark-haired cousin was the descendant of many French *grandes dames.* She clasped the slender hand with her own plump fingers, and shook it heartily. So, in girlish romance and sudden resolution, the little maids sealed a compact which was never broken, and began a friendship which lasted and grew in beauty and strength all through their lives.

At the breakfast-table the next morning there was a merry discussion as to what should be done first to amuse Dora. Jackie, who had invited her to sit beside him and beamed at her approvingly over his porridge and cream, suggested a walk to his favourite candy-store and the purchase of some sticks of "pure chocolate." Marjorie proposed a picnic at Old

Government House. This was approved of, but postponed for a day or two to allow for preparations and invitations. Mr. Merrithew said "Let us go shooting bears," but even Jackie did not second this astounding proposition. As usual, it was "mother" who offered the most feasible plan.

"Suppose, this morning," she said, "you just help Dora unpack, and make her thoroughly at home in the house and garden; then this afternoon perhaps your father will take you for a walk, and show Dora the house where Mrs. Ewing lived, and any other interesting places. That would do for to-day, wouldn't it? Then, day after to-morrow we could have the picnic; and for the next week I have a magnificent idea, but I want to talk it over with your father," and she nodded and smiled at that gentleman in a way which made him almost as curious as the children.

"That's the way with mother," Marjorie

said to Dora after breakfast. " She never ends things up. There is always another lovely plan just ahead, no matter how many you know about already."

And Mr. Merrithew, who overheard the remark, thought that perhaps this was part of the secret of his wife's unfailing youthfulness both in looks and spirits.

The walk that afternoon was one which Dora always remembered. Mr. Merrithew had, as Jackie said, " the splendidest way of splaining things," and found something of interest to relate about almost every street of the little city. They went through the beautiful cathedral, and he told them how it had been built through the earnest efforts of the well-known and venerated Bishop Medley, who was afterward Metropolitan of Canada. Then they wandered down the street along the river, and saw the double house where Mrs. Ewing (whose stories are loved as much in the

United States and in Canada as they are in England) lived for a time, and where she wrote.

She had called this house " Rika Dom," which means " River House," and had written in many of her letters of the beautiful river on which it looked, and the gnarled old willows on the bank just in front of her windows. These willows she had often sketched, and Dora carried away a spray of the pale gray-green leaves, in memory of her favourite story-writer. It was one of Dora's ambitions, kept secret hitherto, but now confided to Marjorie, to write stories " something like Mrs. Ewing's."

They saw, too, the picturesque cottage in which a certain quaint old lady had attained to the ripe age of a hundred and six years, — a record of which Fredericton was justly proud. This venerable dame had been addicted to the unlimited eating of apples, and her motto — she was not a grammatical old lady !

FREDERICTON

— had been (according to tradition), "Apples never hurts nobody."

They spent some time in the Legislative Library, where was enshrined a treasure in the shape of a magnificent copy of Audubon's Books of Birds. Then in the Departmental Buildings, near by, there was a small but well-arranged museum of stuffed birds and beasts, all Canadian, and most of them from New Brunswick. There were other things, too, to see, and many anecdotes to hear, so that it was a somewhat tired, though happy and hungry party which trudged home just in time for tea.

And such a tea, suited to hearty outdoor appetites born of the good Canadian air! There were fresh eggs, made into a white and golden omelette by Mrs. Merrithew's own hands; for even Debby, who had cooked for the family all their lives, owned that an omelette like Mrs. Merrithew's she could not manage, — "No, *sir*, not if I was to cook day and night."

There was golden honey in the comb; there was johnny-cake, hot and yellow and melting in your mouth; strawberry jam that tasted almost as good as the fresh fruit itself; ginger-cake, dark and rich and spicy; milk that was almost cream for the children, and steaming fragrant coffee for their elders.

"It is rather nice to get *good and hungry*," Jackie gravely observed, — "that is, if you have plenty in the house to eat. I think life would be very dull without meals."

These philosophical remarks rather astonished Dora, who was not yet accustomed to the contrast between Jack's sage reflections and his tender years. Just now they seemed especially funny, because he was almost falling asleep while he talked. When Mrs. Merrithew saw him nodding, she rang, and the nurse — who, like Debby, was a family institution — came in and carried him off in her stalwart arms, to his little white bed. When his

mother stole up a little later to give him a final good-night kiss, she heard Susan singing and paused at the door to listen. "Now the day is over" was ended, and then a drowsy voice murmured:

"Now, Susan, my very favourite song!"

And then Susan sang, in her soft, crooning voice "The maple-leaf, the maple-leaf, the maple-leaf for ever!"

CHAPTER III.

The day of the picnic was hot, very hot, for June, but that did not discourage the younger picnickers at all.

"It will be pretty warm on the river," Mr. Merrithew remarked, tentatively, as they sat at dinner. The dining-room windows were open, and the soft air, sweet with the scent of lilacs, blew the white curtains into the room with lazy puffs.

"It will be so lovely when we get to Government House, though," Marjorie cried. "There is always a breeze up there, father, and there are plenty of trees, and three summer-houses, and that big veranda. Oh, I think it will be perfect."

"Yes, Daddy, I do, too! I think it will be *gorlious!*" said Jackie.

When, after much hurrying about, telephoning to tardy members of the party, and good-natured discussion as to the arrangement of the canoe-loads, they were at last afloat on the blue, shining river, they all agreed with Jack. Dora was charmed with the slender Milicete canoes. She had seen chiefly canvas and wooden ones. Her father, indeed, had owned a bark canoe, but it was of much heavier and broader build than these slim beauties, that glided through the water like fairy craft, impelled this way or that by the slightest turn of the steersman's wrist.

They landed just back of Government House, the grounds of which sloped down to the water. The house is a long, stone building, with a broad veranda at the back, and in front nearly covered with Virginia creeper. At the time of the picnic it was empty, and in

charge of a caretaker, who lived in a small cottage on the grounds. When a suitable spot had been chosen for tea, and the baskets piled close by, Mrs. Merrithew proposed an excursion through the house, and Mr. Merrithew went with Jackie to procure the key. When he returned, they all trooped merrily up the front steps, and soon were dispersed through the great echoing halls and lofty rooms. Most of the grown people of the party had danced here at many a stately ball, for in those days Government House had been kept up in the good old-fashioned way. Marjorie and Jack delighted in hearing their mother tell of her "coming out" at one of these balls, and how she had been so proud of her first train that she had danced without holding it up, which must have been trying for her partners. Dora was greatly interested in seeing the room where King Edward, then the slim young Prince of Wales, had slept, on the occasion of his visit

IN THE GOVERNMENT HOUSE GROUNDS

to Fredericton. When the furniture of Government House was auctioned, a few years before our story opens, the pieces from this room, which should have been kept together as of historic interest, were scattered about among various private purchasers. Mrs. Merrithew described them to Dora, who wished she could have seen the great bed, so wide that it was almost square, with its canopy and drapings of rich crimson, and its gilt "Prince of Wales feathers," and heavy gold cords and tassels.

When they came out of the dim, cool house into the warm air, the elders looked apprehensively at the heavy black clouds which had gathered in the west.

"That looks ominous," one of the gentlemen said. "There will certainly be thunder before night."

Thunder! That was Marjorie's horror! Her round, rosy face grew pale, and she clung

tightly to her mother's arm. The men and matrons held a hurried consultation, and decided that the storm was probably not very near, and that it would be safe to wait for tea if they hurried things a little. It would be a terrible disappointment to the children (all, at least, but Marjorie!) to be hurried away without "the picnic part of the picnic." So they all bustled about, and in a short time the cloth was spread, and well covered with good things. The fire behaved well, as if knowing the need of haste, and the coffee was soon made, and as delicious as picnic coffee, by some apparent miracle, generally is. By the time the repast was over, the clouds had drawn closer, the air was more sultry, and even the most optimistic admitted that it was high time to start for home. The canoes were quickly loaded, the best canoe-men took the paddles, and soon they were darting swiftly down-river, running a race with the clouds.

In spite of their best speed, however, the storm broke before they reached their journey's end. The thunder growled and muttered, a few bright flashes lit up the sultry sky, and just as they landed a tremendous peal caused the most courageous to look grave, while poor Marjorie could scarcely breathe from terror. Then the rain came, and the pretty muslin dresses and flower-trimmed hats looked very dejected before their wearers were safely housed! Still, no one was the worse for that little wetting, Marjorie recovered from her fright as soon as she could nestle down in a dark room with her head in her mother's lap, and they all agreed with Jackie that it *had* been "a gorlious time."

Before the children went to bed Mrs. Merrithew told them about the plan which she had mentioned two days before, and to which Mr. Merrithew had heartily consented. He was to take a whole holiday, on Thursday of the fol-

lowing week, and drive them all up to the Indian Village, about thirteen miles above town, to see the Corpus Christi celebrations.

Corpus Christi, a well-known festival in the Roman Catholic Church, is one which has been chosen by the Indians for special celebration. As it comes in June, and that is such a pleasant time for little excursions, many drive to the Indian Village from Fredericton and from the surrounding country, to see the Milicetes in their holiday mood.

The day being fresh and lovely, with no clouds but tiny white ones in the sky, Mr. and Mrs. Merrithew and the three children set off early on Thursday morning. They had a roomy two-seated carriage, and two big brisk, white horses, plenty of wraps and umbrellas in case history should repeat itself with another storm, and an ample basket of dainties. The road, winding along the river-bank most of the the way, was excellent, and the scenery Dora

thought prettier than any she had seen. The river was smooth as a mirror, reflecting every tree and bush on its banks. Little islands, green and tree-crested, were scattered all along its shining length.

It was almost time for the service when they reached the picturesque little village which went climbing bravely up its hill to the chapel and priest's house near the top. The horses were taken charge of by a sedate young half-breed, evidently proud of his office as the "priest's man," and our party at once filed into the chapel. A plain enough little structure in itself, to-day it was beautiful with green boughs, ferns, and flowers. The congregation consisted chiefly of Indians and half-breeds, with a scattering of interested visitors. Most of the natives were clad in gorgeous finery, some of the older ones having really handsome beaded suits and beautifully worked moccasins, while others were grotesque in their queer com-

bination of the clothes of civilization and savagery. The priest, a tall, good-looking man with piercing eyes, sang high mass, and then the procession formed. First came an altar-boy carrying a cross, then six boys with lighted tapers, and two walking backward scattering boughs. These were followed by the priest bearing the host and sheltered by a canopy which four altar-boys carried. These boys were all Indians, and the mild well-featured Milicete faces had lost their stolidity, and were lit up with an expression of half-mystic adoration. After them came the congregation, bareheaded, and singing as they walked. Marjorie and Dora clasped hands as they followed, their eyes shining with excitement. They went down the road and entered a schoolhouse not far from the church, where the host was placed in a little tabernacle of green boughs while the service was continued. Then the procession re-formed and went back to the church.

After they had disbanded, the Indians scattered to their houses to prepare for the various other events of the day. Mr. and Mrs. Merrithew and the children were carried off by the priest (whom Mr. Merrithew knew well) to have dinner with him in his house near the chapel. The children stood a little in awe of him at first, but he was so companionable and kind that they were soon quite at their ease. His mother, who kept house for him, was evidently very proud of her son, and did her best to entertain his visitors worthily. The house was rather bare, but clean as wax and the perfection of neatness, while the repast, spread on the whitest of linen, was excellent, and not without some rather unusual dainties, — such as candied fruits of many colours for the children, and guava jelly brought out especially in Mrs. Merrithew's honour.

After dinner the good father offered to show them through the village, and they set

out together on a tour of inspection. All the full-grown Indians, the priest told them, were holding a pow-wow in the schoolhouse, for the purpose of electing a chief. "There is no need of my being there this afternoon," he said, in answer to Mr. Merrithew's inquiry; "but this evening, when they have their feast and their games, — ah, then I will keep my eye on them!"

Evidently this priest held very parental relations toward his people. The visitors noticed that some boys playing baseball on the green eagerly referred their disputes to him and accepted his word as final. He took them into several of the little wooden houses, all of which, probably in honour of the day, were in splendid order. In one they found twin papooses, brown as autumn beech-leaves, sleeping side by side in a basket of their mother's making. In another a wrinkled old squaw had most dainty moccasins to sell,

the Milicete slipper-moccasins, with velvet toe-pieces beautifully beaded. Mr. Merrithew bought a pair for each of his party (himself excepted), letting them choose their own. Mrs. Merrithew promptly selected a pair with yellow velvet on the toes; Dora's choice had crimson, and Marjorie's blue, while Jackie's tiny pair was adorned with the same colour as his mother's.

"You see, mother dear," he said quite seriously, "yours are a *little* larger, so we won't be mixing them up!"

Then, being in a gift-making mood, Mr. Merrithew bought them each a quaint and pretty basket, besides a big substantial scrap-basket for his own study, and handkerchief-cases, gorgeous in pink and green, for Susan and Debby. The small baskets all had broad bands of the fragrant "sweet hay" which grows on many islands of the St. John, but which very few white people can find. Dora

was much interested in the Milicete women, with their soft voices and kind, quiet faces. She tried to learn some of their words, and won their hearts by singing two or three songs in French, a language which they all understood, though they spoke it in a peculiar patois of their own.

The bright summer afternoon went all too quickly. Mrs. Merrithew was anxious to reach home before too late an hour, so at five o'clock, after tea and cakes, they "reembarked" for the return trip. The horses were fresh, the roads good, the children just pleasantly tired. As they drove on and on through magic sunset light and fragrant summer dusk, Dora thought drowsily that this was a day she would always remember, even if she lived to be as old as the dame who ate the innumerable apples.

"I will have such lovely things to write to father and mother about," she murmured, in

sleepy tones, — and those were the last words she said till the carriage stopped at the door of "the Big Brick House," and she and Jackie were tenderly lifted out and half led, half carried up the steps. Then she opened her eyes very wide and looked about her in wonder.

"Why, I believe I *nearly* went to sleep for a moment," she said.

And even Jackie woke up enough to laugh at that!

CHAPTER IV.

The day before they left for camp, Dora received a letter from her mother, telling something of their surroundings and of the beauties of the Western land. As the others were keenly interested, she read them many extracts, which even Jackie enjoyed.

"We are now," her mother wrote, after describing the journey by the great Canadian Pacific Railway, and speaking encouragingly of the invalid's condition, "comfortably settled in Victoria — which, as of course you know, dear, is the capital city of British Columbia. It is a truly beautiful spot, and the climate is delightful. There are great varieties of climate, we hear, in this maritime province

of the West; Victoria is supposed to enjoy a very mild and even one, with roses and geraniums blooming outdoors in December, and the cold weather confined almost entirely to parts of January and February. There is another delightful part of the country which we may visit later; it is in one of the valleys which cut across the Coast Range of mountains. These deep valleys are entirely shut off from the north winds, and freely admit the warm breezes from the coast, while the rays of the sun are concentrated on their steep sides, helping to make, at times, almost tropical weather. We may spend part of next winter there, as it is even drier than Victoria, and that is very important for your father. Some of our new acquaintances have recommended the southern part of Alberta, where the winter is shortened and made almost balmy by the wonderful chinook winds — so named from the Chinook Indians, who used to occupy that

part of the country from which they blow. These west winds, coming from the mountains across the plains, are warm and particularly drying. When they melt the light and infrequent snowfalls of the winter, they also dry the ground almost immediately, so that even the hollows and ravines are free from dampness. Your father is greatly interested in these 'warm chinooks,' and we are almost sure to try their effect later. Another pleasure to which we look forward, when he grows a little stronger, is a trip by boat along the coast. The fiords of British Columbia are said to resemble those of Norway, and the whole coast, with its wooded shores, snowy mountain-peaks, and flashing cataracts, is marvellously beautiful."

Dora went to sleep that night with her mother's letter under her pillow, and dreamt that they were camping out on the shore of a British Columbian fiord, when a warm wind

came and blew all the tents into little boats, in which they went sailing away to some wonderful country, where no one would ever be sick, and where no winds blew but balmy west ones. She had nearly reached the land, when a soft touch woke her, and she found Marjorie's happy face bending over her.

"Hurry up, dear! Hurrah for camp! We want to start by ten at the latest, and it is seven now, and such a perfect day. Mother says we can take Kitty with us; won't that be fun?"

And Marjorie was off without waiting for an answer. Dora heard her singing, laughing, chatting, as she flashed here and there, helping and hindering in about equal proportions.

The whole house was filled with the pleasant bustle of preparation. Mr. Merrithew was as much of a boy, in the matter of high spirits, as the youngest of the party. Mrs. Merrithew,

blithe and serene, had everything perfectly planned, and engineered the carrying out of the plans with quiet skill. It was she who remembered where everything was, thought of everything that ought to be taken, and saw that every one of the party was properly clad. The party, by the way, was quite a large one, consisting of another whole family (the Greys) besides the Merrithews, Will Graham, a young collegian who was a friend of Mr. Merrithew's, and Miss Covert, a rather delicate and very quiet little school-teacher whom Mrs. Merrithew had taken under her wing from sheer kindness, but who proved a charming addition to the party. The Greys were six in number: Doctor Grey, a grave professor; Mrs. Grey, a tiny, vivacious brunette, who had been Mrs. Merrithew's "chum" since their schoolgirl days; Carl and Hugh, twin boys of fourteen; and two girls, Edith, just Jackie's age, and Alice, so much older than the rest that she was

"almost grown-up," and Marjorie and Dora looked upon her with admiring awe.

Doctor Grey, both mammas, Susan (who was to do the cooking, as Debby did not dare venture on anything so wild as sleeping out-of-doors), Jackie, little Edith Grey, and all the provisions, tents, and bedding, were to go by stage, while Mr. Merrithew, Will Graham, and the twins were to divide the charge of three canoes and the four girls.

At ten o'clock the big lumbering stage rattled up to the door, and the canoeists saw the others properly packed and waved them a cheerful adieu. Then they gathered up paddles, wraps, and lunch-baskets, and hastened gaily off to the boat-house on the river-bank. Here the work of embarking was quickly accomplished, and the four slender birches shot out into the stream, turned, and swept upward, propelled against the current by vigorous arms.

"Please sing, Daddy," Marjorie begged, and

Mr. Merrithew promptly began an old favourite, but could get no further than the first verse.

> "In the days when we went gypsying,
> A long time ago,
> The lads and lasses in their best
> Were dressed from top to toe —"

So far he sang, and then declared that both memory and breath had given out, and that the ladies, who had no work to do, must forthwith provide the music. After a little hesitation and some coaxing from Marjorie, Dora sang, in a clear, sweet treble, the well-known and much-loved "En Roulant ma Boule" ("Rolling My Ball"). Then some one started "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground," and all, even the paddlers, joined in, the little school-teacher providing a rich alto that took them all by surprise.

The river was deep-blue, reflecting the little clouds that floated in the azure overhead. Near the town the river was very broad; as

"THE TREE-CLAD SHORES WORE A FAIRY GLAMOUR"

they forged upward, it gradually narrowed, and was thickly studded with islands. They passed Government House, left the ruined Hermitage behind, and then began to feel that they were at last out of civilization, and nearing the goal of summer quiet that they sought. It was slow work, this paddling against the current, but the time went in a sort of enchanted way; the tree-clad shores wore a fairy glamour, and the islands, where masses of grape-vine and clematis were tangled over the bushes, might have been each the home of an enchanted princess, a dryad, or any of the many "fair forms of old romance." When about five miles had been covered, they heard the rush of water hurrying over shallows and nagging at the rocks. This was what the children delighted to call "The Rapids," but old canoemen simply dubbed it "a stretch of swift water." But by whichever name it went, it called for strong and skilful paddling, and

Mr. Merrithew proposed that, before they undertook it, they should land and fortify themselves with lunch. This suggestion met with great favour; the canoes were swiftly beached, and soon a merry little picnic party sat under a clump of gray shore-willows, while sandwiches, tarts, and cakes of many kinds, vanished as if by magic. Success to the camp was drunk in lemonade — *not* ice-cold — and speeches were made that proved the good spirits, if not the oratorical gifts, of the group.

They rested here for an hour, for one of the camp mottoes was, "Time was made for slaves," and they knew that the ones who had gone on by stage were resting comfortably in a farmhouse, just opposite their destination, till the canoeing party should come to ferry them over. The farmhouse was owned by old friends with whom Mrs. Merrithew and Mrs. Grey would be glad to spend a little time, and

for Jack and Edith the whole place would be full of wonders.

When it came to actually facing the rapids, Dora's heart failed her; her cheeks paled, and her eyes grew very large and dark; but she held on tight to both sides of the canoe, fixed her eyes on Marjorie's back, and said not a word. She tried hard not to see the swirling water and the scowling rocks, but no effort could shut out the confused seething noises that made her feel as if nothing in the world was stable or solid. When at last the rush was over, the sounds grew softer, and the triumphant canoemen drew their good craft in to shore, and paused to rest their tired muscles, Dora gave a deep sigh of relief.

Marjorie turned a beaming face to see what ever was the matter.

"*Frightened*, dear?" she said. "I forgot that you have not had much canoeing. It's too bad."

But Dora laughed, and the colour came back to her face.

"I ought not to mind," she said, "for I have shot the Lachine Rapids. But I think being in a large boat gives one a feeling of safety. I know I wasn't half so afraid then as I was to-day. It seemed to me there was nothing between me and the dreadful confusion."

"Shooting the Lachine Rapids is a great experience," Mr. Merrithew said. "I must confess I would not like to try those in a canoe, as Champlain did! But now, boys, let us set off briskly, or we won't get things comfortable before night."

And they did hurry, but for all their speed it was nearly dusk by the time the five white tents were pitched on Saunder's Island. This was a fairly large island, ringed by a sandy beach from which the ground rose steeply to a green bank on which elms, white birches, and

maples stood, with a tangle of raspberry-bushes, and flowering shrubs among them. Inside the belt of trees was a broad sweep of rich meadow-land, with here and there a row of feathery elms or a cluster of choke-cherry-trees. Toward the upper end of the island stood an old stone house, empty and almost a ruin; not far from this house were two barns, kept in good repair for the storing of the sweet island hay.

The tents were pitched about a hundred yards from the house, just inside the tall bordering trees, so that part of the day they would be in the shade. These trees, too, would make ideal places for slinging the numerous hammocks which Mrs. Merrithew and Mrs. Grey had brought.

Dora and Marjorie greatly enjoyed watching the speed with which the tent-poles — two stout uprights and a horizontal ridge-pole — were got into position, and the skill with which

the white canvas was spread over them and stretched and pegged down and made into a cosy shelter. There was a tiny "A tent" tucked away in the shadiest spot for the provisions, and a large tent in a central position which Mr. Grey named "Rainy-Day House," and which was to be used as dining-room and parlour in case of severe rains; then the other three were called respectively, "The Chaperons' Tent," "The Boys' Tent," and "The Girls' Tent."

The chaperons' abode was inhabited by Mrs. Merrithew, Mrs. Grey, Susan, Jackie, Edith, and the kitten; "The Boys' Tent" was well filled by Mr. Merrithew and Doctor Grey (who insisted on being boys for the occasion), Will Graham, and the twins; and "The Girls' Tent" sheltered Miss Katherine Covert, Alice Grey, Marjorie, and Dora. The beds were of hay, liberally provided by the friendly farmer, — the owner, by the way,

of island, house, and barns. Under each bed was spread either a rubber sheet or a piece of table oilcloth, then over the hay a thick gray blanket was laid. There was another thick blanket to wrap around each person, and still another to put over him, or her, as the case might be. In the chaperons' tent only were they more luxurious; there, two large mattresses took the place of the hay, and made a delightfully comfortable couch for three grown-ups and two children.

While the tents and beds were being attended to, Susan, with a little help from Mrs. Merrithew, had succeeded in getting tea without waiting for any sort of a fireplace to be constructed.

She was rather anxious about the reception of this first meal, as it had been cooked under difficulties. But when she saw the speed with which her fried beans disappeared, and found Mrs. Grey taking a third cup of tea, her

spirits rose, and she decided that campers were thoroughly satisfactory people for whom to cook!

After tea was over, and all the dishes were washed, one of the old campers proposed the usual big bonfire, whereby to sit and sing, but every one was too sleepy, and it was unanimously resolved that just this once the delightful evening of song and story must be omitted. Hearty "good-nights" were exchanged, and soon each tent for a brief while shone, like that in the "Princess," "lamp-lit from the inner," — to be more absolutely accurate, lantern-lit; but what is a trifle of one word, that it should be allowed to spoil a quotation?

Then gently, sweetly, silence settled down over the little encampment; silence, save for the soft murmur of the river in its sleep, and sometimes the drowsy chirping of a bird among the branches.

CHAPTER V.

JACK was the first to wake in the delicious stillness of the morning. When his mother opened her eyes a little later, she found him sitting up beside her with a look of delight and wonder on his face.

"The river talks in its sleep," he said, leaning over her with shining eyes.

"What does it say, Jackie-boy?" Mrs. Merrithew asked.

"I don't know the words,—yet," he answered, "but I will some day."

"Yes, I believe you will, dear," his mother said, with a smile and a sigh, for she firmly believed that her boy, with his vivid imagination and quick apprehension, had the life of a poet before him.

Just then a shout from the boys' tent proclaimed that the twins were awake; then Mr. Merrithew's cheery voice was heard, and soon the camp was alive with greetings and laughter. Under Mr. Merrithew's direction (and with his active assistance), a cooking-place was soon made, and a bright fire inviting to preparations for breakfast. The device for cooking consisted of two strong upright sticks with forked tops, and a heavy horizontal pole resting upon them. On this pole two pothooks were fastened, from which hung the pot and kettle, and the fire was kindled under it. Then a little circle of flat stones was made for the frying-pan, the pot and kettle were filled with fresh water, and Susan's outfit was complete.

Pending the erection of a "camp wash-stand," and the choice of a safe and suitable bathing-place, faces and hands were washed in the river amid much laughter, and with careful balancing on stones in the shallows. The

toilets were barely completed when three toots on the horn announced that breakfast was ready. A long table and benches were among the furniture which Doctor Grey and Mr. Merrithew had planned to make; until their construction, they were glad to group themselves, picnic-fashion, around a table-cloth on the ground. The way that breakfast was disposed of showed that the true camp appetites had begun already to assert themselves. Porridge and molasses, beans, bacon and eggs, and great piles of brown bread and butter, vanished like smoke. Jackie astonished the party (and alarmed his mother) by quietly disposing of a cup of strong coffee, passed to him by mistake, and handing it back to be refilled with the comment that it was " much more satisfyinger than milk."

After breakfast they all set to work with enthusiasm to make camp more comfortable. Susan washed dishes and arranged the pro-

vision tent with housewifely zeal; Mrs. Merrithew and Mrs. Grey brought the blankets out, and spread them on the grass to air, drove shingle-nails far up on the tent-poles to hold watches, pin-cushions, and innumerable small but necessary articles, and superintended the stretching of a rope from one pole to another, about a foot from the ridge-pole. This last arrangement proved most useful, all the garments not in use being hung over it, so that the chaperons' tent, at least, was kept in good order. The gentlemen busied themselves in building the promised table and seats. Mr. Andrews had told them to make use of anything they wanted on his island, so the twins had hunted about till they discovered a pile of boards near one of the barns. These served admirably for the necessary furniture, and after that was finished several cosy seats were made, by degrees, in favourite nooks along the bank. The morning passed with almost incredible

swiftness, and even the youngest (and hungriest) of the campers could scarcely believe their ears when the horn blew for dinner.

In the afternoon some, bearing cushions and shawls, chose shady spots for a read and a doze; some set off in the canoes for a lazy paddle; and others organized themselves into an exploring party to visit the deserted house. Marjorie and Dora, Miss Covert, and Will Graham formed the latter group. The stone house was a curious structure, with an air of solidity about it even in its neglected and failing condition. It had been built many years before by an Englishman, who did not know the river's possibilities in the way of spring freshets. When he found that he had built his house too near the shore, and that April brought water, ice, and debris of many sorts knocking at his doors and battering in his windows, he promptly, if ruefully, abandoned it to time and the elements. It might, long

ago, have been so arranged and protected as to make it a very pleasant summer residence, but, instead, it was now used only for a week or two in haying-time, when the haymakers slept and ate in its basement, — for this quaint little house had a basement, with a kitchen, dining-room, and storeroom. Our visitors, having gained entrance to the hall by a very ruinous flight of steps and a battered door, descended to the basement first, admired the fireplace in the kitchen, and looked rather askance at the deep pile of straw in the dining-room, where the haymakers had slept. There was a rough table in one corner of the room, and on it some tin cups and plates and a piece of very dry bread. The haying on the island was about half-done; there was a short intermission in the work now, but it was to begin again very soon.

They found nothing else of especial interest in the basement, so went to the hall above.

Here were two good-sized rooms, one on each side of the hall. Each had a fine, deep fire-place, and in one were two old-fashioned wooden armchairs and a long table. The windows — two in each room — were narrow and high, and had small panes and deep window-seats.

"Oh, what fun it would be to play keeping-house here, Dora!" Marjorie cried.

"Wouldn't it!" Dora answered. "Let us, Marjorie! Let us pretend it is ours, and choose our rooms, and furnish it!"

"That will be fine," Marjorie answered, fervently, and soon the little girls were deep in a most delightful air-castle.

"Let us play, too," said Will, persuasively, and Katherine answered without hesitation:

"Yes, let us! I feel just like a child here, and could play with a doll if I had one!"

"Well, — let me see; we will begin by deciding about the rooms," said Will. "Let us

have this for the study, — shall we? — and put the books all along this wall opposite the windows!"

And so these two "children of a larger growth" played house with almost as much zest as Marjorie and Dora, — and greatly to the amusement and delight of the latter couple when they caught a word or two of their murmured conversation. Up-stairs were four rather small rooms with sloping ceilings, and in the middle of the house, just over the front door, a dear little room without the slope, and with a dormer-window.

"This shall be our boudoir," Dora said, as they entered, and then stopped and exclaimed in surprise, for against one wall stood a piano! Almost the ghost of a piano, or the skeleton, rather, — at the very best, a piano in the last stage of decrepitude, but still a piano. Its rosewood frame had been whittled, chopped, and generally ill-treated, and more than half

its yellow keys were gone, but oh, wonder of wonders, some of those remaining gave a thin, unearthly sound when struck! It seemed almost like something alive that had been deserted, and the little group gathered around it with sympathetic exclamations.

While they were talking and wondering about it, lively voices proclaimed the approach of the twins.

"We won't say anything about our housekeeping play," said Dora, hastily, turning to Mr. Graham, and Marjorie loyally added, "except to mother."

"All right, if you like," the student agreed, and Miss Covert quickly added her assent. The twins admired the stone house, the fireplaces, and the piano, but with rather an abstracted manner. Soon the cause of their absent-mindedness transpired. Mr. Merrithew had met some Indians that afternoon, when they were out paddling, and had bought

a salmon from them. This had led to a conversation about salmon-spearing, and the Indians had promised to come the following night, and show them how it was done. They could take one person in each canoe, and Mr. Merrithew had said that Carl and Hugh should be the ones. Of course they were greatly excited over this prospect, and chattered about it all the way back to the tents.

That evening, when dusk had settled down, a great bonfire was built, and they all sat around it on rugs and shawls, in genuine camp-fashion. First, some of the favourite games were played, — proverbs, "coffee-pot," characters, and then rigmarole, most fascinating of all. Rigmarole, be it known, is a tale told "from mouth to mouth," one beginning it and telling till his invention begins to flag or he thinks his time is up, then stopping suddenly and handing it on to his next neighbour. The result is generally a very funny, and sometimes quite

"A GREAT BONFIRE WAS BUILT"

exciting, medley. To-night Mr. Merrithew began the story, and his contribution (wherein figured a dragon, an enchanted princess, and a deaf-and-dumb knight) was so absorbing that there was a general protest when he stopped. But the romancer was quite relentless, and his next neighbour had to continue as best he could. Even Jackie contributed some startling incidents to the narrative, and when at last Mrs. Grey ended it with the time-honoured (and just at present, most unfortunately, out-of-fashion !) assurance that they all, even the dragon, " lived happy ever after," there was a burst of laughter and applause. Then some one began to sing, and one after another the dear old songs rose through the balmy night. Sometimes there were solos, but every now and then a chorus in which all could join. Dora sang every French song she knew, — " A la Claire Fontaine " (" At the Clear Fountain "), " Malbrouck," and " Entre Paris et Saint-

Denis" ("Between Paris and St. Denis") proving the favourites. Mrs. Grey, who declared she had not sung for years, ventured on "The Canadian Boat-Song" and "Her bright smile haunts me still." At last, when voices began to grow drowsy and the fire burned low, they sang, "The Maple-Leaf For Ever" and "Our Own Canadian Home," then rose and joined in the camp-hymn, — "For ever with the Lord," with its:

> "And nightly pitch our moving tents
> A day's march nearer home."

The next day seemed to fly, to every one, at least, but Carl and Hugh. Their hearts were so set on the salmon-spearing that for them the time went slowly enough till night brought the four Indians with their torches and spears. Doctor Grey and Mr. Merrithew walked along the shore to see what they could of the proceedings, but the rest — and even Will — were content to sit around the fire as before. Carl

sat in the middle of one canoe, and Hugh in the other, both greatly excited and both trying to think themselves quite cool. Only the steersmen paddled, — the bowmen kneeling erect and watchful, with their spears in readiness. (The salmon-spear is a long ash shaft, with two wooden prongs and a metal barb between them. The spearing of salmon, by the way, is restricted by law to the Indians, and any white man who undertakes it is liable to a fine.) Sticking up in the bow of each canoe was a torch, made of a roll of birch-bark fastened in the end of a split stick. The red-gold flare of these torches threw a crimson reflection on the dark water, and shone on the yellow sides of the birches, and the intent, dusky faces of the fishermen watching for their prey. Slowly, silently, they paddled up the stream, till at last the silvery sides of a magnificent fish gleamed in the red light. Then, like a flash, a spear struck down, there was

a brief struggle, and the captive lay gasping in the foremost canoe. It was too much for Hugh. He had enjoyed with all his boyish heart the beauty and the weirdness of the scene, but the beautiful great fish, with the spear-wound in his back, — well, that was different. He was not sorry that the Indians met with no more luck, and was very silent when the others questioned them, on their return, as to the joys of salmon-spearing. When he confided to Carl his hatred of the "sport," the latter shook his head doubtfully.

"But you will help eat that salmon to-morrow," he said.

"Well, — perhaps," Hugh answered, "but, all the same, it's no fun to see things killed, and I'm not going to if I can help it!"

The fortnight of camp life passed like a dream, and it is hard to tell who was most sorry when the day of departure came. Dora, who had written a regular diary-letter to her

father and mother, and begun one of the stories that were to be like Mrs. Ewing's, said that never in all her life had she had such a beautiful time. Katherine Covert, with life-long friends to "remember camp by," and all sorts of happy possibilities in her once gray life, bore the same testimony with more, if more quiet, fervour. Mr. Merrithew said that he was ten years younger, and Jackie opined that, in that case, they must have been living on an enchanted island, — but added, that he was very glad *he* had not been made ten years younger, like Daddy!

Brown and plump and strong of arm, the campers brought back with them hearty appetites, delightful recollections, and inexhaustible material for dream and plan and castles in the air.

Many pleasant things were waiting to be done on their return; first and foremost, Miss Covert had come to live at the Big Brick

House, to teach the children when holiday time should be over, and to be a help generally to Mrs. Merrithew. Also, according to Mrs. Merrithew's plans, to have a little real home life and happiness, — for Katherine had been an orphan since her childhood, and for five years had taught school steadily, although it was work that she did not greatly like, and that kept her in a state of perpetual nervous strain. Teaching a few well-bred and considerate children, whom she already loved, would be quite different, and almost entirely a pleasure.

CHAPTER VI.

In the delightful autumn days that followed, the children, accompanied sometimes by Mrs. Merrithew, sometimes by Katherine, spent much of their time in the woods, and taking long strolls on the country roads. In October the woods were a blaze of colour, — clear gold, scarlet, crimson, coppery brown, and amber. The children brought home great bunches of the brilliant leaves, and some they pressed and varnished, while others Katherine dipped in melted wax. They found that the latter way was the best for keeping the colours, but it was rather troublesome to do. They pressed many ferns, also, and, when the frosts became keener, collected numbers of white ferns, delicately lovely. Most of these treasures, with

baskets full of velvety moss and yards of fairy-like wild vines, were stowed away in a cool storeroom to be used later in the Christmas decorations.

When the last of October drew near, Mrs. Merrithew made up her mind to give a little Hallow-eve party. She let the children name the friends they wished her to ask, and added a few of her own; then they all busied themselves in preparations, and in making lists of Hallow-eve games and tricks. At last came the eventful evening, and with it about thirty merry people, old and young, but chiefly young. All of the Greys were there, of course; also Mr. Will Graham, who was taking his last year at college, and who spent most of his spare time at Mr. Merrithew's. So the whole camping-party met again, and the camp-days, dear and fleeting, came back in vivid pictures to their minds.

In the Big Brick House was a large room

known as "the inner kitchen," but used as a kitchen only in the winter. This room Mrs. Merrithew had given up to the entertainment of the Hallow-eve party. It was lighted — chiefly, that is, for a few ordinary lamps helped out the illumination — by lanterns made of hollowed pumpkins. Ears of corn hung around the mantel, and a pyramid of rosy apples was piled high upon it. There was a great old-fashioned fireplace here, and a merry fire sparkled behind the gleaming brass andirons. Every trick that their hostess's brain could conjure up was tried. Those who cared to, bobbed for apples in a tub of water, and some were lucky enough to find five-cent pieces in their russets and pippins. An apple was hung on a string from the middle of a doorway, then set swinging, and two contestants tried which could get the first bite, — and this first bite, gentle reader, is not so easy as you might imagine!

A pretty little ring was laid on a mound of flour, and whoever could lift it out between their lips, without breaking down the mound, was to win the ring. This necessitated a great many remouldings of the flour, — but finally the prize was captured by Miss Covert. A little later, Dora noticed it hanging on Mr. Graham's watch-guard.

Some of the braver spirits took turns in walking backward down the garden steps, and to the end of the middle path, a looking-glass in one hand and a lamp in the other. What each one saw in the looking-glass, or whether, indeed, they saw anything, was, in most cases, kept a secret, or confided only to the very especial chum! Then there were fortunes told by means of cabbages, — a vegetable not usually surrounded with romantic associations. Marjorie was the first to try this mode of divination. Well-blindfolded, she ventured alone into the garden, and came back soon

with a long, lean, straggly cabbage with a great deal of earth attached to its roots. This foretold that her husband would be tall and thin, and very rich!

There were many other quaint methods of fortune-telling, most of them derived from Scottish sources. After these had been tried, amid much merriment, they played some of the old-fashioned games dear to children everywhere, — blind-man's buff, hunt-the-feather, post-towns, and other favourites. By and by, when the fun began to flag, and one or two little mouths were seen to yawn, a long table was brought in and soon spread with a hearty (but judiciously chosen) Hallow-eve supper.

When the days began to grow short and bleak, and the evenings long and cosey, the children were thrown more and more upon indoor occupations for their entertainment. It was on one of these bleak days, when a few white flakes were falling in a half-hearted way,

and the sky was gray and gloomy, that Jackie had a brilliant idea. Four of them — Katherine, Marjorie, Dora, and Jackie himself — were sitting by the fire in Mrs. Merrithew's "Den," the very cosiest room in the house. Mr. Merrithew had a den, too, but he called his a study. Somehow it looked too much like an office to suit the children very well. Most of the volumes on his shelves, too, were clumsy law-books; all the books that any one wanted to read, except the children's own, were in "mother's den." Then, one could come to mother's room at any hour of the day or night, while sometimes no one, excepting Mrs. Merrithew, was admitted to the study. On this particular day Katherine was reading "Rob Roy," and Jack building a castle of blocks, while Dora dreamed in the window-seat, watching the scanty flakes, and Marjorie, on the hearth-rug, tried to teach reluctant Kitty Grey to beg.

Now Jack had accompanied his mother on the previous Sunday to the anniversary service of the Sons of England, a well-known patriotic society. He had been greatly impressed by the procession, the hymns, and the sermon, and on coming home had asked his father many questions as to the "why and wherefore" of the society. It was this episode which suggested the bright idea to his active little brain.

"Aunt Kathie," he said,—for Miss Covert was now a fully accepted adopted aunt,—"why couldn't *we* form a patriarchal society?"

"A *what*, dear?" said Kathie, in rather startled tones, laying "Rob Roy" on the table, for she liked to give her whole mind to Jackie's propositions and queries.

"A patri—oh, you know what; like the Sons of England, you know!"

"Oh, yes! *Patriotic*, dearie; a patriotic society. You know a patriot is one who loves

his country. What sort of a patriotic society would you like to have, Jack?"

"Oh, pure Canadian, of course! Let me see, — we couldn't be the Sons of Canada, because we are not all sons."

"Not *quite* all," murmured Dora, with drowsy sarcasm, from the window.

"Why not Children of Canada?" suggested Kathie.

"No, Aunt Kathie, that would never do at all, for mother and Daddy and you must be in it, and you *couldn't* be called children, — though, of course, you're not so *very* old," he added, as if fearing he had hurt her feelings.

"Well, said Marjorie, thoughtfully, "how would The Maple-leaves, or The Beavers, do?"

But Jackie scorned this suggestion.

"*Those* are names that baseball clubs have," he said. "No; I believe 'The Sons and Daughters of Canada' would be the best of

all, because everybody is either a son *or* a daughter, even twins!"

This statement, and the name, were accepted with acclamation, and the quartette, entering thoroughly into the spirit of Jackie's plan, helped him zealously to put it into execution. They insisted that he should be president, and requested him to choose the other officers. So he made his father and mother the honourable patrons, Dora and Marjorie vice-presidents, and Kathie secretary-treasurer. This office, I may mention, she nobly filled, and also the informal one of general adviser, suggester, and planner. It was she who proposed the twins, Alice and Edith, as members, and the president gave his consent, though he considered Edith rather too young!

"For my part," he said, "I should like Mr. Will Graham, if none of you would mind!" No one seemed to mind, so Mr. Graham's name was added to the list, which Katherine

was making out beautifully, with Gothic capitals in red ink, on her very best paper. Her next proposal was a regular course of study in Canadian history and literature, and this was enthusiastically received. When Mr. and Mrs. Merrithew came home at tea-time, they found a well-organized "Sons and Daughters of Canada" club, and Miss Covert already engaged in composing an article on "The Beginnings of Canadian History," — with Jackie in her mind as an important member of her future audience, and therefore an earnest effort to make it simple in language and clear in construction.

All through the winter the club flourished, and indeed for a much longer time. The members met every week, and the history and literature proved so absorbing that the S. A. D. O. C. night came to be looked forward to as eagerly by the older as by the younger sons and daughters. Kathie had the gift of making

scenes and people of long-past days live before one, and Cartier and Champlain, La Salle and De Maisonneuve, and many another hero became the companions of our patriotic students, both waking and in their dreams. The works of Canadian poets and novelists began to fill their book-shelves, and pictures of these celebrities to adorn their walls. They had regular weekly meetings, at which there were readings and recitations, and always one short historical sketch. Even Jack learnt his "piece" each time, and said it with a severe gravity which seemed to defy any one to smile at a mispronunciation! Mrs. Merrithew designed their badges, — maple-leaf pins in coloured enamel, with a little gilt beaver on each leaf, — and Mr. Merrithew had them made in Montreal. But perhaps the proudest achievement ot the club was Alice Grey's "Sons and Daughters of Canada March," which was played at the opening and closing of every meeting.

So much pleasure and profit, many happy evenings, and an ever deeper love for their country, were some of the results of Jackie's bright idea.

CHAPTER VII.

Now there came, warming the frosty heart of December, that delightful atmosphere of mystery and expectation which forms one pleasure of the great Yule-tide festival. The Big Brick House seemed particularly full of this happy spirit of the season. There were many mysterious shopping excursions, and much whispering in corners, — a thing not usual in this united family. Jackie showed a sudden and severe self-denial in the matter of sticks of pure chocolate, and was soon, therefore, able to proudly flourish a purse containing, he told his mother, "a dollar all but eighty-five cents," saved toward buying his presents for the family. He also spent much time at a little table in his own room, cutting out pictures and

pasting them into a scrap-book for a little lame boy of his acquaintance.

Mrs. Merrithew and Kathie had each, besides innumerable other matters, a water-colour painting on hand. Each picture, strange to say, was of a house. Mrs. Merrithew's, the Big Brick House itself, with its trees and vines, was clearly intended for Daddy; but for whom, the children wondered, was Aunt Kathie's? It was a spirited little view of the old stone house on Saunder's Island; not so pretty a subject as Mrs. Merrithew's, but set in such a delicate atmosphere of early morning light that even the sombre gray of the stone seemed etherialized and made poetic. While Marjorie and Dora wondered for whom it was meant, Jackie promptly inquired, — but she, his dear Aunt Kathie, who had never refused to answer question of his before, only laughed and shook her head, and said that every one had secrets at Christmas-time.

Marjorie and Dora did not, as was their wont, spend all of their time together, for each was making a present for the other. Marjorie was working hard over a portfolio, which she knew was one of the things Dora wanted. She had carefully constructed and joined the stiff cardboard covers, and plentifully provided them with blotting-paper, and now she was embroidering the linen cover with autumnal maple-leaves in Dora's favourite colour, a rich, vivid red. As for Dora, though she had no love for needlework, she was laboriously making a cushion of soft, old-blue felt for Marjorie's cosey-corner, working it with a griffin pattern in golden-brown silks. Marjorie had a particular fancy for griffins, — partly, perhaps, because a griffin was the chief feature of the family crest.

As the long-looked-for day drew nearer, there was other work to do, almost the pleasantest Christmas work of all, Dora thought, —

the making wreaths out of fir and hemlock and fragrant spruce. They worked two or three hours of each day at the decorations for the beautiful little parish church which they all attended, and which, being very small, was much easier than the cathedral or the other large churches to transform into a sweet-smelling tabernacle of green. Then they trimmed the Big Brick House almost from attic to cellar. The drawing-rooms were hung with heavy wreaths, with bunches of red cranberries here and there, making a beautiful contrast to the green. In the other rooms there were boughs over every picture, and autumn leaves, ferns, and dried grasses here and there. Mr. Merrithew was sure to buy some holly and mistletoe at the florist's on Christmas Eve, so places of honour were reserved for these two plants, which have become so closely entwined with all our thoughts of Christmas and its festivities. The holly would adorn the old

oil-painting of Mrs. Merrithew's great-aunt, Lady Loveday Gostwycke, which hung over the mantelpiece in the front drawing-room. As for the pearly white berries of the mistletoe, they were to hang from the chandelier in the hall, where people might be expected forgetfully to pass beneath them. Jackie, who was very useful in breaking twigs for the wreath-making, begged a few fine wreaths as a reward, and carried them off to decorate little lame Philip's room. These lengths of aromatic greenery gave the greatest pleasure to the invalid, and scarcely less to his mother, who spent the greater part of her time in that one room.

Besides all these pleasant doings, there were great things going on in the kitchen. Such baking and steaming and frying as Debby revelled in! Such spicy and savoury odours as pervaded the house when the kitchen door was opened! Marjorie and Dora liked to help, whenever Debby would let them, with these

proceedings. It was great fun to shred citron and turn the raisin-stoner, and help chop the mince-meat, in the big kitchen, with its shining tins, and general air of comfort. Jackie liked to take a share in the cooking, too, and as he was Deborah's pet, he generally got the wherewithal to make a tiny cake or pudding of his own. When it came to the making of the big plum pudding, all the family by turns had to stir it, according to a time-honoured institution. Then Mr. Merrithew would make his expected contribution to its ingredients,—five shining five-cent pieces, to be stirred through the mixture and left to form an element of special interest to the children at the Christmas dinner. Besides this big pudding, there were always three or four smaller ones (without any silver plums, but very rich and good), for distribution among some of Mrs. Merrithew's protégés.

On Christmas day all the old customs were

faithfully observed. It was the rule that whoever woke first in the morning should call the others, and on this occasion it was Jackie who, as the great clock in the hall struck six, came running from room to room in his moccasin slippers and little blue dressing-gown, shouting "Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas," at the top of his voice.

Every one tumbled out of bed, as in duty bound, and soon a wrappered and slippered group, all exchanging Christmas wishes, met in Mrs. Merrithew's den. Here a fire glowed in the grate, and here, too, mysterious and delightful, hung a long row of very fat white pillow-cases! These were hung by long cords from hooks on the curtain-pole. Each pillow-case bore a paper with the name of its owner written on it in large letters, and they were arranged in order of age, from Jackie up to Mr. Merrithew. This had been the invariable method of giving the Christmas presents in

this particular family for as long as any of them could remember.

Armchairs and sofas were drawn near the fire, and the party grouped themselves comfortably; then Mr. Merrithew lifted down Jackie's pillow-case and laid it beside him, as he sat with his mother in the largest of the chairs. Every one looked on with intensest interest while, with shining eyes, and cheeks red with excitement, he opened his parcels, and exclaimed over their contents. Truly a fortunate little boy was Jack! There were books — the very books he wanted, — games, a top, the dearest little snow-shoes, a great box of blocks, — evidently Santa Claus knew what a tireless architect this small boy was, — a bugle, drum, and sword, a dainty cup and saucer, a picture for his room, and, too large for the pillow-case, but carefully propped beneath it, a fine sled, all painted in blue and gold and crimson, beautiful to behold!

When Jackie had looked at every one of his presents, it was Marjorie's turn, and she was just as fortunate as her brother. So it went on up the scale, till they had all enjoyed their gifts to the very last of Mr. Merrithew's, and every box of candy had been sampled. And still Aunt Kathie's picture of the little stone house had not appeared!

When at last, a merry party, they went down to breakfast, Deborah and Susan came forward with Christmas greetings, and thanks for the well-filled pillow-cases which they had found beside their beds. The dining-room in its festal array looked even cheerier than was its wont. By every plate there lay a spray of holly, to be worn during the rest of the day. The breakfast-set was a wonderful one of blue and gold, an heirloom, which was only used on very special occasions. In the centre of the table stood a large pot of white and purple hyacinths in full bloom, the fourth or fifth of

Mr. Merrithew's presents that morning to his wife.

At eleven o'clock there was the beautiful Christmas service, which all the family attended, with the exception of Jackie. He was considered too young to be kept still for so long a time; so he stayed at home with Susan, trying all the new toys and having samples read aloud from each new book. Kitty Grey, decorated with a blue ribbon and a tiny gilt bell, also kept him company, and seemed to take great pleasure in knocking his block castles down with her soft silvery paws.

When the churchgoers returned there was lunch; then, for the children, a long, cosey afternoon with their presents. Mrs. Merrithew and Katherine early disappeared into the regions of the kitchen and dining-room, for the six o'clock dinner was to have several guests, and there was much to be arranged and overseen. But by half-past five the whole family

was assembled in the big drawing-room, and neither Mrs. Merrithew nor Kathie looked as if they had ever seen the inside of a kitchen. Mrs. Merrithew wore her loveliest gown, a shimmering silver-gray silk with lace sleeves and fichu, and lilies-of-the-valley at her neck and in her abundant hair. As for Katherine, in her fawn-coloured dress with trimmings of yellow beads, and deep yellow roses, Jackie said she looked like a fairy lady, — and on the subject of fairies he was an authority. The little girls were in pure white, with sashes of their favourite colours, and the gold and coral necklaces which had been among their gifts; while Jackie, in his red velvet suit and broad lace collar, looked not unlike the picture of Leonard in "The Story of a Short Life."

Presently the guests began to arrive. First came Miss Bell, a second cousin of Mr. Merrithew's, and the nearest relative he had in Fredericton. She was very tall, very thin,

quite on the shady side of fifty, and a little deaf. Nevertheless, she was decidedly handsome, with her white hair, bright, dark eyes, and beautifully arched brows. She was a great favourite with the children, and always carried some little surprise for them in her pocket. A little later came a widowed aunt of Mrs. Merrithew's, fair, fat, and frivolous; and a bachelor uncle, who came next in the esteem of the children to Cousin Sophia Bell. Two young normal school students, sisters, who were not able to go home for the holidays, soon swelled the party, and last, but not least, came Mr. Will Graham, looking very handsome in his evening clothes.

When they went out to dinner Jackie escorted Cousin Sophia, and Marjorie overheard him saying, in urgent tones:

"I *wish* that you and Uncle Bob would come and live with us, — but I *don't* want Aunt Fairley; she is too funny all the time!"

The Christmas dinner was much like other Christmas dinners, except that Debby's cooking was unsurpassable. After every one had tasted everything, and three of the five-cent pieces had come to light, the chairs were pushed back a little, and while nuts and raisins were being discussed, they had also catches, rounds, and choruses. Each person with any pretence to a voice was expected to give one solo at least. Jackie, who had a very sweet little voice, sang "God Save the King," with great fervour. But the favourite of the evening was the beautiful "Under the Holly Bough," with the words of which they were all familiar.

Presently, Jackie, who had been promised that he should choose his own bedtime that night, was found to be fast asleep with his head on his green-leaf dessert plate, and a bunch of raisins clasped tightly in one hand. He was tenderly carried away, undressed, and

tucked into bed, without once opening an eye. As Kathie turned to leave him, she picked up one of his best-beloved new books,—"Off to Fairyland," in blue and gold covers, with daintily coloured pictures,—and laid it beside him for a pleasant waking sight the next morning. Down-stairs she found the rest of the party gathered around the fire, telling stories of Auld Lang Syne. As almost every one had been up early that morning, no very lively games seemed to appeal to them; but the children thought no game could be so interesting as these sprightly anecdotes and rose-leaf-scented romances that were being recalled and recounted to-night. "Do you remember—" Cousin Sophia would say; then would follow some entrancing memories, to which Mr. and Mrs. Merrithew, Uncle Bob, and Mrs. Fairley would contribute a running comment of "Yes, yes! she was a lovely girl!" "He never held up his head after she died!" and so on.

Then Mrs. Fairley would hum an old-time waltz, and branch off into reminiscences of balls, — and of one in particular at Government House, where she had lost her satin slipper, and the governor's son had brought it to her, and called her Cinderella. She put out a satin-shod foot as she talked, and Marjorie thought that, though it certainly was tiny, it was not at all a pretty shape, and began to understand why her mother made her wear her boots so loose.

About ten, Susan brought tea and plum-cake, and when this had been disposed of, they all, according to another time-honoured custom, gathered around the piano, and sang the grand old words that unnumbered thousands of voices had sung that day:

"Oh, come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant;
Oh, come ye, oh, come ye
To Bethlehem!

Come and behold him
Born the King of angels;
Oh, come let us adore him,
Christ the Lord!"

"NOTHING, DORA THOUGHT, COULD BE MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THOSE WOODS IN WINTER"

CHAPTER VIII.

Snow-shoeing is one of the national sports of Canada, in which most Canadians, big and little, are proficient. Marjorie and her cousin were no exception to the rule, and Jackie proved a very apt pupil. He soon learned to avoid striking one snow-shoe against the other, and fell quickly into that long, easy swing, which makes the snowy miles go by so quickly. Sometimes the three children tramped on the broad, frozen river, but that was a cold place when there was any wind, so they generally chose the hill-roads or the woods. Nothing, Dora thought, could be more beautiful than those woods in winter, with the white drifts around the grayish tree-trunks, the firs and hemlocks rising like green islands out of a

snowy sea, and the wonderful tracery of brown boughs against the pale blue of the sky. Once, Mr. and Mrs. Merrithew went with them for a moonlight tramp, and that was something never to be forgotten.

It was just after a heavy snowfall, and the evergreens were weighed down with a white covering that sparkled and glittered as with innumerable jewels. Another favourite amusement was coasting, — not tobogganing, but good, old-fashioned coasting, generally on College Hill, but sometimes down the steep bank of the river. Coasting parties were frequent, and it was a pretty sight to see the hill dotted with blanket-coated and toqued or tam-o'-shantered figures, and pleasant to hear the merry voices and laughter as the sleds skimmed swiftly down the road.

The winters in Eastern Canada, though cold, are wonderfully bright and clear, and the air is so free from dampness that one does

not realize how cold it sometimes becomes, unless one consults the thermometer. Canadians, as a rule, spend a great deal of time in the open air in winter as well as summer, and are as hardy a race as can be found anywhere, but when they *are* indoors they like their houses good and warm, — no half-measures, no chilly passages and draughty bedrooms for them!

Mr. Merrithew did not keep horses, but occasionally he would hire a big three-seated sleigh and take the family for a delightful spin. They would all be warmly wrapped in woollens and furs, and snuggled in buffalo-robes; the bells would jingle merrily, the snow would "skreak" under the horses' feet, and the white world slip by them like a dream.

One day, about the middle of February, Mrs. Merrithew announced, at breakfast, that it was high time for the drive to Hemlock Point, which Mr. Merrithew had been promis-

ing them all winter. As the latter quite agreed with this idea, they decided to go on the following morning, spend a long day with the friends they always visited there, and return by moonlight. Hemlock Point was somewhere between ten and twenty miles up-river, — it does not always do to be too exact, — and their friends lived in a quaint old farmhouse, on high ground, well back from the river-bank.

That evening, when they sat in the Den after lessons were done, Marjorie told Dora about the good folk who lived there, — an old bachelor farmer, the most kind-hearted and generous of men, but as bashful as a boy; his two unmarried sisters, who managed his house and thought they managed him, but really spoilt him to his heart's content; and an orphan niece, who had lived with them for several years, and who was the only modern element in their lives. She graphically described the old loom, the big and little spin-

ning-wheels, and the egg-shell china, till Dora was as anxious as Jackie for to-morrow to come.

The three-seated sleigh and the prancing horses were at the door of the Big Brick House by eight the next morning, for the drive would be long and the load heavy, and it was well to be early on the way. The girls and Jackie wore their blanket-suits, — Dora's and Jackie's crimson and Marjorie's bright blue, — and Mrs. Merrithew herself, snugly wrapped in furs, brought a grand supply of extra cloaks and shawls. She was always prepared for any emergency. Mr. Merrithew said that he never knew her fail to produce pins, rope, a knife, and hammer and nails, if they were needed. But the hammer and nails she repudiated, and said it was twine, not rope, she carried! The sky was a little overcast when they started, but the prospect of a snow-storm did not daunt them in the least.

The bells, of which there were a great many on the harness, kept up a musical, silvery accompaniment to the conversation, as the horses swung at a good speed along the level. When the hills began to rise, the pace slackened, and the passengers had a better chance to enjoy the beauties spread on both sides of the road.

"But oh, you ought to see it in summer!" Marjorie said, when Dora praised the varied and lovely landscapes. "There are so many things yet for you to see all around here. You will have to stay two or three years more at least!"

But Dora laughed at this.

"What about all the things there are for you to see in Montreal?" she said. "What about the Ice Palace, and —"

"Please tell about the Ice Palace, Dora," Jack interrupted. "That must be a gorlious sight!"

So Dora tried to give her cousins some idea of the great palace of glittering ice, and the hundreds of snow-shoers, in bright costumes and carrying torches, gathered together to storm this fairylike fortress.

"It must be fine," said Marjorie, when the story was done, "but I'd rather storm Hemlock Point, and get fried chicken and buttermilk as the spoils of war."

Marjorie, being a tremendous home-girl, generally tried to change the subject if Dora made any allusions to a possible visit of Marjorie alone to Montreal. She could not bear the thought of parting with Dora, but to part with mother and Daddy and Jack would be three times worse!

The last part of the road was decidedly hilly, and the horses took such advantage of Mr. Merrithew's consideration for their feelings, that Jackie, lulled by the slow motion and the sound of the bells, fell asleep against

his mother's shoulder, and knew no more till he woke on a couch in Miss Grier's sitting-room. The oldest Miss Grier — whom every one called Miss Prudence — was bustling about, helping Marjorie and Dora off with their things, and giving advice to Miss Alma, who was hastening to start a fire in the great old-fashioned Franklin. Miss Dean, the niece, was taking off Mrs. Merrithew's overboots, in spite of her polite protests. Jackie's eyes were open for some moments before any one noticed him; then he startled them by saying, in perfectly wide-awake tones:

"I think, Miss Lois Dean, you are the very littlest lady in the world!"

Miss Dean, who certainly could not well be smaller and be called grown-up at all, and whose small head was almost weighted down by its mass of light hair, looked at her favourite with twinkling eyes.

"Never mind, Jackie, the best goods are

often done up in small parcels; and I'm big enough to hold you on my lap while I tell you stories, which is the main thing, isn't it?"

"Yes, indeed," Jack cried, jumping up to hug her, which resulted in the pretty hair getting loosened from its fastenings and tumbling in wild confusion around the "littlest lady," where she sat on the floor.

"Now you are a fairy godmother! Now you are a fairy godmother!" exclaimed Jackie, dancing around her.

"Then I will put a charm upon you at once," Lois said. "No more dancing, no more noise, no more *anything*, until we get the wraps all off and put away; then you and I will go and — fry chicken — and sausages — for dinner!"

The last part of the sentence was whispered in Jack's ear, and caused him to smile contentedly, and to submit without a murmur to the process of unwrapping.

After dinner, — which did great credit to Lois and her assistant, — they gathered around the Franklin in the sitting-room, with plates of "sops-of-wine" and golden pippins within easy reach, and Mr. Grier and Mr. Merrithew talked farming and politics, while Miss Prudence recounted any episodes of interest that had taken place at or near Hemlock Point during the past year.

Mrs. Merrithew, who had spent her summers here as a girl, knew every one for miles around, and loved to hear the annals of the neighbourhood, told in Miss Prudence's picturesque way, with an occasional pithy comment from Miss Alma.

Dora sat, taking in with eager eyes the view of hill and intervale, island and ice-bound river; then turning back to the cosey interior, with its home-made carpet, bright curtains, and large bookcase with glass doors.

After a little while Lois, who saw that the

children were growing weary of sitting still, proposed a stroll through the house, to which they gladly consented. Katherine asked if she might go with them, and they left "the enchanted circle around the fire," and crossed the hall to the "best parlour," — which Miss Prudence always wished to throw open in Mrs. Merrithew's honour, and which the latter always refused to sit in, because, as she frankly said, it gave her the shivers. This was not on account of any ill-taste in the furnishing, but because it was always kept dark and shut up, and Mrs. Merrithew said it could not be made cheery all of a sudden. The children, however, loved the long room, and the mysterious feeling it gave them when they first went in, and had to grope their way to the windows, draw back the curtains, and put up the yellow Venetian blinds, letting the clear, wintry light into this shadowy domain. This light brought out the rich, dark colours of the

carpet, and showed the treasures of chairs and tables that would have made a collector's mouth water. There was a round table of polished mahogany in the centre of the room, a tiny butternut sewing-table in one corner, and against the wall, on opposite sides of the room, two rosewood tables, with quaint carved legs, and feet of shining brass. On the tables lay many curious shells, big lumps of coral, and rare, many-coloured seaweeds, — for there had been a sailor-uncle in the family, — annuals and beauty-books in gorgeous bindings, albums through which the children looked with never-failing delight, work-boxes and portfolios inlaid with mother-of-pearl; almost all the treasures of the family, in fact, laid away here in state, like Jean Ingelow's dead year, "shut in a sacred gloom."

When this room had been inspected and admired, they lowered the blinds, drew the curtains, and left it again to its solitude. The

rest of the house was much less awe-inspiring, but it was all delightful. The loom, now seldom or never used, stood in one corner of the kitchen. Not far away was the big spinning-wheel. Miss Dean tried to teach them to spin, and when they found it was not so easy as it looked, gave them a specimen of how it should be done that seemed almost magical. There is, indeed, something that suggests magic about spinning, — the rhythmically stepping figure, the whirling brown wheel, the rolls of wool, changed by a perfectly measured twirl and pull into lengths of snow-white yarn, and the soothing, drowsy hum, the most restful sound that labour can produce.

Then there was the up-stairs to visit. The chief thing of interest there was the tiny flax-wheel which stood in the upper hall, and which certainly looked, as Jack said, as if *it* ought to belong to a fairy godmother. In the attic,

great bunches of herbs hung drying from the rafters, and the air was sweet with the scent of them. There were sage, summer-savoury, sweet marjoram, sweet basil, mint, and many more, with names as fragrant as their leaves. On the floor, near one of the chimneys, was spread a good supply of butternuts, and strings of dried apples stretched from wall to wall at the coolest end of the one big room.

"If I lived in this house," Dora said, "I would come up here often and write, — try to write, I mean!"

"I come up here often and read," Miss Dean said, with a quick glance of comprehension at the little girl's eager face. "I love it! And sometimes, when I feel another way and it's not too cold, I put up one blind in the best parlour, and sit in there."

"I wish you were coming down to sit in mother's den, and read — and talk — and

everything!" said Marjorie, and the others echoed the wish.

"So I am, some time or other," Lois answered. "Mrs. Merrithew has asked me, and now it's just a question of how soon Aunt Prudence can spare me. That may be next week, — or it may be next winter!"

"It may be for years and it may be for ever," Dora quoted, laughing, and Jackie added, "and then — when you do come — we will make you a Son and Daughter of Canada right away!"

The search for the egg-shell china took them back to the sitting-room, where Lois begged Miss Prudence to exhibit this most fragile of her belongings. With natural pride, that lady unlocked a china-closet, and brought out specimens of the beautiful delicate ware which their grandmother had brought over with her from Ireland, and of which, in all these years, only three articles had been

broken. It certainly was exquisite stuff, delicately thin, of a rich cream-colour, and with gilt lines and tiny wreaths of pink and crimson roses.

"I thought we would have them out for tea," Miss Alma suggested, but Mrs. Merrithew, with three children, all rather hasty in their movements, to look after, begged her not to think of such a thing.

"Your white and gold china is pretty enough for any one;" she said, "and, my dear Prudence, if you are determined to give us tea after that big dinner, we will have to ask for it soon, or we will be spending most of the night on the road."

"Dear, dear!" said Miss Prudence, putting back her treasures tenderly, "it does seem as if you'd been here about half an hour, and I do hate to have you go! But I know how you feel about being out late with the children, and you won't stay all night. Come along,

Alma, let's hustle up some tea, and let Lois talk to Mrs. Merrithew awhile."

And "hustle" they certainly did, spreading a board that groaned with the good old-fashioned dainties, for the cooking of which Miss Prudence was noted throughout the country. Then the horses were brought to the door, tossing their heads in haste to be off, wraps were snugly adjusted, good-byes said many times, and they were off.

"I believe Grier has given these horses nothing but oats all day," Mr. Merrithew muttered, as the pretty beasts strained and tugged in their anxiety to run down-hill; but when it came to the up-hill stretches, they soon sobered down, and were content with a reasonable pace. Warm and cosey, nestled against his mother, Jackie soon slept as before; but the others, with rather a reckless disregard of their throats, sang song after song,

in spite of the frosty air, and dashed up to the door of the Big Brick House, at last, to the sound of:

> "'Twas from Aunt Dinah's quilting party
> I was seeing Nellie home."

CHAPTER IX.

To invalids, or to the really destitute, Canadian winters, clear and bright though they are, may seem unduly long; but for our little Canadian Cousins, warmly clad, warmly housed, and revelling in the season's healthful sports, the months went by as if on wings. With March, though the winds were strong, the sun began to show his power, and by the middle of the month the sap was running, and the maple-sugar-making had begun. Jackie persuaded his father to take him out one morning to the woods, and to help him tap a number of trees. When they went back later and collected the tin cups which they had left under the holes in the trees, they found altogether about a pint of sap. This they took

carefully home, and Jack persuaded every one to taste it, then boiled the remainder until it thickened a little, — a very little, it is true, — and the family manfully ate it with their muffins for tea, though Mrs. Merrithew declared that she believed they had tapped any tree they came across, instead of keeping to sugar-maples.

Toward the end of the month Mrs. Grey got up a driving-party to one of the sugar-camps, and though it was chiefly for grown people, Mrs. Merrithew allowed Dora and Marjorie to go. The drive was long, and rather tiring, as the roads were beginning to get "slumpy," and here and there would come a place where the runners scraped bare ground. But when they reached the camp they were given a hearty welcome, allowed to picnic in the camp-house, and treated to unlimited maple-syrup, sugar, and candy.

The process of sugar-making has lost much

of its picturesqueness, since the more convenient modern methods have come into use. Mrs. Grey remembered vividly when there were no camp-houses, with their big furnaces and evaporating pans, and no little metal "spiles" to conduct the sap from the trees to the tins beneath. In those days the spiles, about a foot in length, were made of cedar, leading to wooden troughs, — which, she maintained, gave the juice an added and delicious flavour. But this their host of the sugar-camp would not admit, though he agreed with her that the process of boiling must have been much more interesting to watch when it was done in big cauldrons hung over bonfires in the snowy woods. When the visitors left camp, each one carried a little bark dish (called a "cosseau") of maple-candy, presented by the owner of the camp, and most of them had bought quantities of the delicious fresh sugar.

April brought soft breezes, warmer sunshine and melting snow. It seemed to Dora that people thought of scarcely anything but the condition of the ice, and the quantity of snow in the woods. Then they began to say that there would be a freshet, and Debby, who was apt to forebode the worst, announced that the bridges would go this time, sure! Mr. Merrithew only laughed when Marjorie asked him about it, and said that this prophecy had been made every year since the bridges were built, and that there was no more danger this year than any other. But Mrs. Merrithew, though she could not be said to worry, still quietly decided what things she would carry with her in case of a flight to the hills! The freshet which was talked about so much was, in spite of Mr. Merrithew's laughter, a remote possibility; certainly not a probability. In his own and Mrs. Merrithew's youth, it had been so imminent that people actually *had* gone to the

hills. A tremendous jam had been formed a few miles above town; but a few days of hot sun had opened the river farther down, and the danger had passed. Since the two bridges, however, had been built, some people thought that there was a chance of the ice jamming above the upper bridge. Usually the worst jams were between the islands, not far above town.

Each day some fresh word was brought in as to the river's condition. "The River St. John is like a sick person, isn't it?" Dora said one afternoon. "The first thing every one says in the morning is, 'I wonder how the river is to-day.'"

The words were scarcely out of her mouth when Mr. Merrithew came in hastily, calling out:

"Come, people, if you want to see the ice go out. The jam by Vine Island is broken. Come quick. It's piling up finely!"

In a very few minutes the whole family answered to his summons, and they set out in great excitement to watch their dear river shake off its fetters. They made their way quickly to the wooden bridge, and found a good share of the population of Fredericton there assembled. It was truly a sight well worth going to see. Below the bridge the dark water was running swiftly, bearing blocks of ice, bits of board, and logs, — indeed, a fine medley of things. But *above* the bridge! Jackie clapped his hands with delight, as he watched the ice, pushed by the masses behind it, throw itself against the mighty stone piers, and break and fall back, while the bridge quivered afresh at each onslaught. It was truly grand to see, and they stayed watching it for more than an hour; stayed till Jackie began to shiver, and Mrs. Merrithew hurried them home.

By the next morning the river was rapidly clearing, so that some reckless spirits ventured

to cross in boats and canoes, dodging the ice-cakes with skill worthy to be employed in a better cause. In a day or two more the deep whistle of the river-boat was heard; a sound that brings summer near, though not a leaf be on the trees. But it was not until the ice had entirely ceased running, and the river had begun to go down, that really warm weather could begin, for, until then, there was always a chill air from the water.

But after that, — ah, then spring came in earnest, with balmy airs and singing birds, pussy-willows, silver gray, beside the brooks, and little waterfalls laughing down the hills. Then came the greening fields, the trees throwing deeper shadows, and the Mayflowers, pink and pearly and perfect, hiding under their own leaves in damp woodland hollows! The children made many excursions to gather these fragrant blooms, and kept quantities of them in the Den until the season was over.

It would be hard, Mrs. Merrithew thought, to find anything more lovely, and to show how thoroughly she appreciated their attention, she made for each child a little Mayflower picture in water-colours. In Marjorie's the flowers were in a large blue bowl, on a table covered with an old-blue cloth; for Jackie she painted them in a dainty shallow basket, just as he had brought them from the woods; and for Dora there was a shadowy green bit of the woodland itself, and a few of the braver blossoms just showing among leaves and moss.

CHAPTER X.

Once more the lilacs were in blossom in the garden of the Big Brick House. The blackbirds called and chuckled in the lofty branches of the elms, and robins hopped about the lawns, seemingly with the express purpose of tantalizing Kitty Grey. On the lawn, where the hammocks hung, a happy group was gathered. Mr. and Mrs. Merrithew were there, Marjorie and Dora, Katherine and Jack, and two others who evidently formed the centre of attraction. Of these, one was a tall, thin man, with a frame that must once have been athletic, and a pathetic stoop in the broad shoulders. He sat in a deep armchair, with Dora contentedly nestled on his knee. In a hammock near him sat a lady, with a dark, lovely face, beautifully arched brows, and soft

eyes, so like Dora's that a stranger might have guessed their relationship.

Mr. Carman, though still an invalid, was wonderfully better, and both he and his wife were full of praises of the great, beautiful West, its scenery, its climate, and its possibilities.

"I have come to the conclusion," Mr. Carman said, after an enthusiastic description of a sunset in the Rocky Mountains, "that it is no wonder we Canadians are proud of our country."

"Then you and Aunt Denise shall be 'Sons and Daughters,'" cried Jackie, "and you can read a paper about the West at our very next meeting. That *will* be fine!"

And Uncle Archie and Aunt Denise were accepted then and there as members of the S. A. D. O. C.

The travellers had only arrived the day before, so there was still much to ask and tell;

but Dora and her parents had already had a long talk as to plans and prospects, and the little girl was radiant with delight over the arrangements that were decided upon. Marjorie, who could not help being a little cast down at the prospect of a separation from her cousin, wondered that Dora did not seem to mind at all. But when, by and by, they strolled off together to the grape-arbour for a talk, she understood the reason of this cheerfulness.

"I want to tell you all about our plans," Dora began, as soon as they were seated in their favourite nook. "You see, mother says that dear father, though he is certainly better, won't be able to work for a long, long time. Next winter they will probably go to Barbadoes, where some friends of mother's are living; and if they do, I am to stay with you *all winter* again, — if you will have me, Marjorie! Your mother says *she* will!"

"*Have* you!" Marjorie exclaimed. "Oh, but I am glad! I don't know what I will do without you all summer, but it is fine to know that at least we will have the winter together."

Then Dora burst into a peal of laughter, and clapped her hands over the news that she had to tell.

"Oh, I've got the best to tell you yet," she said. "Father and mother have quite decided to stay *here*, in Fredericton, all summer! They want to rent a furnished house, just as close to this one as they possibly can; and then we will be together almost every minute, just as we are now. *Won't* it be lovely?"

Marjorie sat quiet for a minute, and thought it over with shining eyes. Then she gave Dora a regular "bear-hug," and cried:

"I feel just like Jackie does when he dances a war-dance! I was going to say that it was too good to be true, but mother says she doesn't like that saying, for there is nothing

too good to come true sometime, if it isn't already. Come and tell Jack and Aunt Kathie, quick! They will be almost as glad as I am!"

So these little Canadian Cousins went hand in hand down the garden-path, full of happy thoughts of the long bright summer days that spread before them.

THE END.

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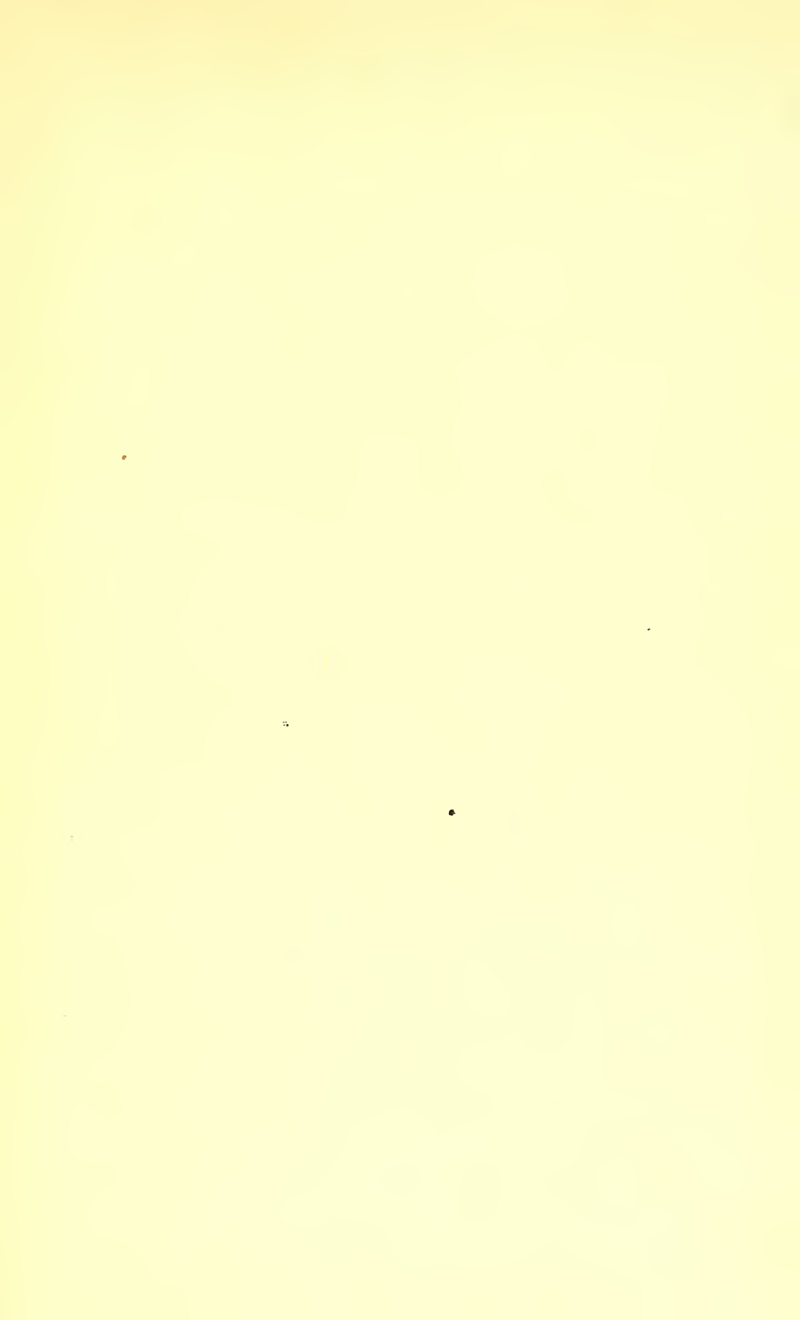

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